



Testimony from the Interreligious Eco-Justice Network  
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Environment Committee  
February 10, 2021

Testimony in support of ***Raised S.B. 837 AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF PERFLUOROALKYL OR POLYFLUOROALKYL SUBSTANCES IN CLASS B FIREFIGHTING FOAM***

Dear Senator Cohen, Representative Borer, Ranking Members Senator Miner, Representative Harding and distinguished members of the Environment Committee,

The Interreligious Eco-Justice Network is a statewide, faith-based environmental organization that works to empower religious communities in Connecticut to be faithful stewards of the planet. We are deeply concerned about the dramatic increase in toxic chemicals in our environment and support ***Raised S.B. 837 AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF PERFLUOROALKYL OR POLYFLUOROALKYL SUBSTANCES IN CLASS B FIREFIGHTING FOAM*** with recommendations.

This class of perfluoroalkyl or polyfluoroalkyl chemicals, known as PFAS chemicals, are resistant to water, grease, stains, and petroleum based products. As a result, PFAS chemicals are used in an enormous variety of products, including firefighting foam, known as aqueous film-forming foam (AFFF). Unfortunately, the chemicals are highly toxic and do not break down. They are linked to testicular and kidney cancers, liver damage, thyroid disruption, low birth weights, ulcerative colitis and impaired immunity. This is especially tragic when we consider that the people most likely to be exposed to PFAS in firefighting foam are firefighters and first responders – the heroes in our community who go into dangerous fires to help others. We should not also expose them to these dangerous chemicals as well.

When this firefighting foam is used, either for training purposes or to fight a real fire, it can easily release into the environment. In June 2019, just days after the legislative session finished, there was a leak of 40,000 gallons of firefighting foam into the

Farmington River. The environmental damage continues to this day and many people who live along the river have been exposed to PFAS.

We received word today that DEEP has selected a fluorine-free foam and will announce the details of a take-back program for our local fire departments. This is excellent news and we applaud their efforts in this area. We believe that we can do more, however, and urge a full ban on AFFF by 2022, unless required by federal law. As DEEP has just shown, safe alternatives exist and can be utilized without risk to public health, the environment, and our brave first responders and firefighters. Thank you so much for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Very best regards,

Terri Eickel, Director, Interreligious Eco-Justice Network